

TWO
DISCOURSES
ON
Catholic Communion,

Relating in particular
To the different Sentiments of CHRISTIANS
Concerning BAPTISM:

AND
Preached at BARBICAN,

April 14 & 21, 1754.

If ye had known, what this meaneth; I will have mercy and not sacrifice; you would not have condemned the guiltless, Matt. xii. 7.

Whatsoever ye would, that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets, Matt. vii. 12.

By CHARLES BULKLEY.

L O N D O N:

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JOHN iii. 5.

Except a man be born of water,
and of the spirit, he cannot enter
into the kingdom of God.

IT has been for a long time apprehended Introduc-
tion.
by many, that these words contain the
express and positive injunction of our blessed
Savior, that none should be admitted to the
Lord's Supper but those, who have been bap-
tized. And as there is no command in the
New Testament for the baptizing of any but
the adult, as the infant-part of mankind are
indeed excluded by the very meaning and te-
nor of the institution from being the proper
subjects of baptism, those churches, which
adhere to this original institution, have
thought themselves, for these reasons, suffi-
ciently authorized to debar from their com-
munion, that is, from the celebration of the
Lord's Supper amongst them, all those, who
have not been previously baptized in adult
years, whatever other proofs equally solid
and convincing they may have given of their
faith in Christ, and how unexceptionable so-

Introduc-
tion.

A defence
of Catholic
Communi-
on, not-
withstand-
ing differ-
ent opini-
ons relative
to Baptism,
proposed.

ever may be their life and conversation. But being myself fully persuaded, that there is not in the new testament the least foundation for such exclusive measures, and that they cannot be justified upon any principles whatsoever, I have thought it might not be amiss to lay before you the grounds and reason of my opinion. And with this view I have chosen to discourse upon that passage of scripture, which is chiefly insisted upon by those of the contrary sentiment, which is commonly represented as being absolutely decisive in the case, and which appears to be thought so clear and full to the purpose, as to render all other arguments in a manner unnecessary. I am very sensible, that in the pursuit of this design, I must unavoidably oppose the judgment of many of those to whom I am now addressing myself. But they will easily conclude, that it is not for the sake of that opposition merely that I have engaged in it. You, my friends, of this differing persuasion, will naturally recollect, that all mankind are subject to mistakes and errors, that what may be our own in particular, cannot possibly be discovered, but by a free and impartial examination, and that truth ought to be equally acceptable to us, whether it be found to lie on the side of our present opinion, or whether it obliges us to reject it. You will, I hope, upon this occasion, remember, that

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did I less interest myself in your welfare and happiness, and in the honor and prosperity of your society, than I really do, I should be so much the less concerned about any sentiments, which you might entertain, and that whatever principles will justify you, in contending for what you now think to be the truth will, upon a fair and candid interpretation, equally justify me in declaring against it. On all these accounts I flatter myself, that without incurring the censure of arrogance or presumption, I may enter upon an unreserved and distinct consideration of the subject proposed; and not only so, but that I may expect likewise your diligent and unprejudiced attention, whilst I endeavor in the integrity of my heart, and according to the best dictates of my understanding, to lay before you "the truth, as it is in Jesus." And as to that other part of this audience, who are already thoroughly convinced, that the principle of a catholic and unconfined communion of all serious christians, for which I am now to plead, is indeed perfectly agreeable to the christian plan, I persuade myself, that the acknowledged goodness of my design, will not only recommend what I have to offer to your favorable reception, but even excite your warmest wishes for the success of my endeavors.

My

Introduc-
tion.

My design then is, in the first place, to shew you, that these words of our Savior, " Except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ;" that these words, I say, have in reality no reference at all, either to Baptism or to the Lord's Supper, and therefore cannot be supposed to contain any directions about the proper qualifications of being admitted to the latter.

Order of
discourse.

Secondly, that, allowing them to have some such reference in general, they cannot, with any propriety, be interpreted as a rule, by which the right of attending upon the Lord's Supper is confined to those only who have been baptized in their adult years, or afford any ground or justifying reason for such a limitation.

Thirdly, to consider such objections as have been or may be urged against what I shall advance ; and then conclude.

In the first place I am to shew you, that these words of our Savior, " Except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ;" that these words, I say, have in reality no reference at all either to baptism or to the Lord's Supper, and cannot therefore be supposed to contain any directions concerning the proper qualifications for being admitted to the latter.

Now

Now by looking into the chapter, in which these words are recorded, we shall find, that they are intended to express exactly the same sentiment, which is contained in those preceding words, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" as is plain from verse the seventh, where this first maxim is again repeated in such a manner, as necessarily to imply, that, notwithstanding the variety of expression, the sense or meaning of the third and of the fifth is to be looked upon as precisely equivalent. As therefore there is nothing in the expression of "being born again," that can possibly of itself imply any reference to baptism, it should seem, that we cannot be under any necessity of supposing such a reference in that other expression of "being born of water," unless it can be shewn, that no other interpretation of this latter phrase can with propriety be assigned. But this is by no means the case. For we find, that in scripture "washing" is frequently used to denote the purification of the heart and life, without the least reference to any external action, that might be symbolical of such an inward and moral purification. "Purge me, says the Psalmist, Psal. li. 7, with hyssop, and I shall be clean, *wash* me and I shall be whiter than snow. There is, says Solomon, in his

book

Explication
of our Sa-
vior's con-
ference
with Nico-
demus.

The expli-
cation con-
tinued.

“book of Proverbs, Chap. xxx. 12, a ge-
neration that are pure in their own eyes,
and yet are not *washed* from their filthiness.
Wash ye, says the Prophet Isaiah, Chap. i.
verse 16, make you clean, put away the
evil of your doings from before mine eyes.”
And, to add no more, the Prophet Jere-
miah thus addressees himself to the inhabitants
of Jerusalem, Chap. iv. 14. “O Jerusalem,
wash thine heart from wickedness, that
thou mayest be saved.” Now if *washing*
may be thus applied and made expressive of
the moral purity of the mind and temper,
there can be no difficulty in supposing that
water, with which *washing* is usually per-
formed, should be applied in the same sense.
To this sense it seems to have been purposely
confined and limited in the text by the ad-
dition of the word “spirit.” For certainly
“to be born of water, and of the spirit,” is a
phrase very naturally and fully expressive of a
spiritual or mental purification, in direct con-
tradistinction from that which is merely ex-
ternal and corporeal. But farther,

Being born
of water,
and of the
spirit

What.

Secondly, that the “being born of wa-
ter” does indeed solely, and intirely refer to
this moral purity, without including, as any
part of its meaning, this or that external
emblem of it, seems to have been absolutely
determined by our Savior himself in the words
immediately following the text, and ex-
pressly

pressly designed to guard against any wrong interpretation of it. "That, he observes, The explanation continued.

"v. 6, 7, which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not, that I said unto you, ye must be born again." Nicodemus had before objected, "How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

And it is in the words just now cited that our Savior obviates the difficulty. What then is the meaning of them? or what can it be but this, that the birth he referred to was purely spiritual, and was not to be considered, as the objection absurdly supposed, as having any connection with what was "born of the flesh." But if there be any thing in christianity, that can justly come under the denomination of fleshy or corporeal, it must certainly be the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and these only, they being immediately relative to the body, tho' in their ultimate use and intention fitted for the benefit and advantage of the mind. To interpret the words of the text therefore of these two ordinances is to run directly, and as far as we can, into that very error against which our Savior himself has expressly cautioned us in his own explication of them. Give me leave to observe,

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Thirdly,

The expli-
cation con-
tinued.

Kingdom
of God ;

Sense of
that phrase.

Thirdly, that, if these words refer to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, then as by *water* must be meant Baptism, so by the *kingdom of God* must be denoted the Lord's Supper. But this would be a sense given to that phrase in this particular passage, which occurs not elsewhere in the new testament. The kingdom of God does there sometimes mean the future state of glory, sometimes the whole dispensation of the gospel, at other times its great and ultimate end, that prevalence and dominion of religion and virtue in the soul of man, which it was designed to establish, but no where, that I know of, any particular doctrine or institution of it. Nay St. Paul seems absolutely to have decided against that interpretation of these words, which, in order to support the principle it is intended to support, must suppose that by the kingdom of God is meant the Lord's Supper ; when he says, " the kingdom of God is not meats and drinks (the strict peculiarities of the Lord's Supper) " but righteousness, peace and joy in the " Holy Ghost." I know indeed that those who urge the passage of scripture, which we are discoursing upon, as the foundation on which they establish the maxim of an unmixed and limited communion, think it sufficient for that purpose, that by the kingdom of God may be meant the visible church. And ac-

cordingly

cordingly they so interpret it, supposing it to be here asserted, that without baptism a man cannot be a member of the visible church, and that from thence it will follow of course, that he cannot possibly have a right to partake of the Lord's Supper. But here again it may be justly questioned, whether this phrase, the kingdom of God, is ever used in the new testament to denote the visible church of Christ, or which amounts to the same thing, the external profession of christianity. Our Savior seems rather to declare against any such use of it, when he says, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo, here, or lo, there," but that it is "within us." Should this however be admitted, yet it is apparent, that there are other external marks, by which men may with equal clearness and certainty profess themselves christians, and consequently become members of the visible church, besides that of baptism. For let us suppose any one not only to be a thorough believer of christianity, but likewise upon all occasions to declare himself such, let us suppose of the same person, that he should by some particular situation or treatment in life, and notwithstanding this his sincere belief and open profession of christianity be for a time deprived of every

The explanation continued.

The expli-
cation con-
tinued.

Members
of the vi-
sible
church,

Who.

tunity of being baptized ; could it justly be said of him, on that account, and during such a season, that he was not a member of the visible church ? Would not his public declaration of his faith in Christ, and his uniform profession of christianity necessarily constitute him such, notwithstanding this circumstance ? Is it not highly probable, that at the first publication of the gospel many might be real converts to the christian faith, who might not, for some time after their conversion, have an opportunity of being baptized ? But might they not nevertheless, with the strictest propriety be called members of the visible church ? Might not their faith be altogether as well known to others by their conduct and profession, before they had such opportunity, as it could be after they were actually baptized ? Nay, we are told in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Acts, at the beginning, that, when Saint Paul was at Ephesus, he met with some, whom the Evangelist expressly calls disciples, plainly speaking of them as persons known to be christians, that is, as members of the visible church, of whom nevertheless we are afterwards told, that they had not received christian baptism. And it must surely be obvious to every one, that whatever action, or series of actions amounts to a declaration of a man's belief

belief of the gospel, that action or series of actions must by the necessary purport and meaning of it constitute him a member of the visible church ; since that very phrase itself, if rationally interpreted, can mean nothing more than an external profession of the gospel. We cannot therefore suppose our Savior should have declared baptism to be the only possible method of becoming a member of the visible church ; because this would have been declaring against the nature and reality of things : it would have been asserting that to be impossible, which might in many instances prove to be plain and undeniable fact. And are there not vast numbers, with respect to whom we ourselves have not the least doubt of their being christians, tho' we believe them never to have been baptized ? Consequently we must suppose, that without baptism they have given us sufficient evidence of their being christians. And by allowing this we allow them to be members of the visible church. If therefore this passage of scripture, which we are now considering, has any reference at all to the Lord's Supper, it cannot be, because baptism is absolutely necessary to a man's being a member of the visible church, since this is not true in fact : Neither is it what we ourselves believe to be true. But in order to support and justify such

The expli-
cation con-
tinued.

The expli-
cation con-
tinued.

such an interpretation we must be obliged to suppose, that by "the kingdom of God" is here meant the Lord's Supper, contrary to what appears to be the meaning of that phrase in every other passage of the new testament, where it occurs. But to proceed ;

Our blessed
Savior's
method of
instruction ;

Remark
upon it.

It is apparent, in the fourth place, that the discourse, of which the words we are now considering make a part, was addressed by our Savior to Nicodemus at their first interview. Now to suppose, that in this his first discourse with him he should, begin with instructing him in the nature and design of the external services of religion, would be to represent him as acting a part, in this single instance, contrary to what appears to have been his method upon all other occasions. When he entered upon his public ministry, the great maxim he inculcated was, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And in his conversation with the woman of Samaria, the only point insisted upon, is the great, fundamental principle of christianity and of all religion, the spiritual worship of God, and the being devoted to him by the integrity and goodness of our hearts, in express contradiction from what is merely external and ritual. In like manner, when one had asked our Savior, "tempting him, which was the great commandment of the law ;" and our Savior had, in return asked him, "what is writ-

"ten

"ten in the law? how readest thou;" to which he had replied, that "to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, was more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices;" our Savior took notice, that "he answered discreetly," adding this important observation and no more; "this do and thou shalt live." And it is very observable to the same purpose, that, in the case of the young ruler, who was so particularly desirous of knowing, "what yet" might be "lacking" to compleat and perfect the good and sound state of mind, our Saviour instructs him in the fundamental principles of morality, and points out to him a noble opportunity of exercising the generosity of his temper; but never gives him the least intimation with respect to any external appointments of his religion. In all these instances, I say, the great, essential, fundamental principles of religion are insisted upon, without any reference at all to its positive duties of baptism or the Lord's Supper. That interpretation of our text therefore, which supposes a contrary method to have been pursued in the single case of Nicodemus, must needs be thought highly improbable. And indeed so far was our Savior from making these positive institutions of baptism and the Lord's Supper any part of his first instructions, that he even deferred the institution of the last of them

The explanation continued.

The expli-
cation con-
tinued.



Baptism
and the
Lord's Sup-
per,

them to the time of his death. And this leads me to observe yet farther.

Fifthly, That our Savior in this conversation, censures and blames Nicodemus for not understanding him. But should we suppose, that in what he had been saying to him, he referred to baptism and the Lord's Supper; how is it possible, that he should have understood him? Our Saviour had not as yet instituted either of these ordinances; nor could Nicodemus by any means know, that he had any such design. "Art thou, says our Savior to him, a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" As a master, or a teacher in Israel he might, he ought to have known, the absolute necessity of being purified in spirit, or in the temper and disposition of our minds, in order to our obtaining the divine favor and our participating in all the glorious and immortal effects of it. But how could it have been expected by our Savior, that, as a master in Israel, he should know, that baptism was a necessary qualification for being admitted to the Lord's Supper; or even any thing about the Lord's Supper? And tho' John had indeed publicly baptized, and our Savior, in order to do public honour to his mission, had received his baptism; yet how is it possible, that Nicodemus should know any thing of his design, to transfer that practice into his own religion, when

when as yet he had made no declarations upon that head, nor had himself ever baptized either in his own person, or by his apostles acting under his authority. For we are expressly told in this very chapter, that it was "after these things," after this discourse with Nicodemus, that "Jesus came with his disciples into Judæa and baptized," that is, appointed his disciples to do it. How then was it possible, that Nicodemus should have understood our Savior, if he be supposed to have spoken in this discourse of baptism and the Lord's Supper? How utterly improbable at least must it be, even admitting this, that our Savior should have blamed him for not doing it? For do the phrases, "being born again" and "being born of water", so necessarily and evidently "mean baptism, and "the kingdom of God", so necessarily, and evidently mean the Lord's Supper, that it must have been impossible for any man to have understood these phrases otherwise, when made use of by the author of the christian religion, even tho' he had never before heard of either of those ordinances, as making a part of that religion? When I lay all these particulars together, I cannot but conclude, that they amount to the fullest demonstration, that these words of our Savior, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter in-

The explanation continued.

Time of their institution.

The expli-
cation con-
tinued.

“ to the kingdom of God”, have no reference at all, either to baptism or to the Lord’s Supper. Much less can I apprehend, that they were intended as a rule, by which the having complied with one of these ordinances, is made a necessary qualification for being admitted to communicate in the observance of the other. But the meaning of the passage, I suppose to be no other than this important maxim, that unless a man be “ purified” in *spirit*, or in the temper and disposition of his *mind*, he cannot possibly be qualified for the divine favor, or the happiness of heaven. And this alone would, I think, be sufficient to determine the whole debate. For if these words should appear to contain no rule or injunction of the kind now mentioned, I believe the warmest advocates for such a restriction, with respect to the right of attending upon the Lord’s Supper, will find it extremely difficult to fix upon any other passage, in which they can so much as suppose the least appearance of any such rule or injunction.

Plea for ca-
tholic com-
munion.

But, in order to do all possible justice to the argument we are upon, let it be for the present admitted, that this passage has in general a reference to baptism and the Lord’s Supper, yet I would observe, and it is what I proposed,

In the second place, to prove, that even in
that

that case, it cannot with any propriety be interpreted as containing a rule, by which the right of attending upon the Lord's Supper is limited only to those, who have been baptized in their adult years; nor can afford any ground or justifying reason for such a limitation of the use and benefits of that ordinance. Nay, supposing it should be still farther allowed, that the words contained a fixed, invariable rule, that none should be admitted to the Lord's Supper, who had not been previously baptized; yet, who is to judge, whether the person offering himself to our communion be baptized, or not? We say, that the immersion of the adult, upon a serious profession of their faith in Christ, is the only baptism instituted by the gospel. And we have, I think, reason abundantly sufficient for saying so. But have we any authority to impose this judgment upon others, or to oblige them to make it the rule of determination in their own case? Does not Saint Peter say, ^{Baptism,} that baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh", or the washing of water merely, but "the answer of a good conscience towards God?" All those therefore, who really and conscientiously apprehend, that by any thing that has passed, during their infancy, the christian ap- ^{What is,} pointment of baptism has been truly and fully complied with, so far as relates to their own ^{and} personal

Plea for ea-
tholic com-
munion.

Plea for catholic communion.

what is not,

Who to judge.

personal concern with that institution ; all such persons, I say, must, so long as they continue to be of that judgment, have a right to look upon themselves as baptized, as much a right to do this as we ourselves can pretend to, even tho', what they call by the name of baptism, does not amount to what we believe to have been instituted by Christ under the same. This must necessarily be admitted, unless we would absolutely deprive them of the right of judging in their own case, what is baptism and what is not ; a right which must certainly belong as much to them, as to ourselves. And if they consider themselves as baptized, and have an undoubted right so to do, must they not, even supposing baptism to be a necessary term of communion in the Lord's Supper, have a right to claim that communion, being in their own judgment really and truly baptized ? And if they have a right to claim it, we cannot possibly have a right to reject this their claim, since this would be to suppose the same thing both right and wrong, lawful and unlawful. As for ourselves ; we have not any doubt, but that the baptism, which we have received, upon profession of our faith in Christ, is the baptism, which he appointed. Nevertheless it is well known, that those of the roman, catholic persuasion will not allow, that any of us are regularly and truly baptized. Suppose

now,

now, that we could reconcile ourselves to the other parts of their communion in the Lord's Supper, should we not think it extremely hard to be excluded from it merely because we were not, in their judgment, regularly and truly baptized? Should we not plead, that we really thought ourselves to be so, and that therefore, if there was any such thing as a right of private judgment in the case, they could not have any sufficient reason for rejecting us, even supposing baptism to be a necessary term of communion in the Lord's Supper; since, upon that supposition, they themselves could have no other right of admission to this communion, but what was founded upon this very conviction of their own minds, that they had been really and truly baptized. Nor can we. All serious Christians therefore, who have the same conviction, must have exactly the same right to claim an admission to the Lord's Supper, as we ourselves have, even supposing baptism to be a necessary term of communion, and how much soever their judgment concerning the nature of it may differ from our own. From all which it does, I think, undeniably appear, that supposing the words of the text to make baptism a necessary term of communion, they must nevertheless be so interpreted, as to make the fullest allowance for the right of private judgment in the case of baptism, as well

Plea for catholic communion.

Plea for catholic communion.

well as with respect to other points differently apprehended among christians ; or else we must deny, that any such right does in fact subsist, and deliberately set up our own judgment as the rule of determination and guide of conscience to others. But that these words of our Savior could not possibly be intended to exclude any from the Lord's Supper, merely on account of their not having been baptized in adult years, or to give us a right of excluding any one upon that account, will, I apprehend, still more evidently appear, from considering in the

Design of the Lord's Supper.

Second place, what is the true nature and design, the real end and use of the Lord's Supper. Of this our Savior himself has given us a very clear, tho' a compendious view, by saying at the first institution of it, " This do " in remembrance of me." And is not every serious, well-disposed christian capable of complying with this commandment, even tho' he may not, thro' the mistake of his judgment, have been baptized in his adult years? May he not nevertheless remember the great redeemer of mankind with cordial affection? May he not celebrate his condescending love with fervent praise and gratitude? May not his doing this, by an attendance upon an ordinance of our blessed Savior's own appointment, be productive of the most beneficial and salutary effects upon his

his temper and life, effects of the very same kind with those, which can alone be rationally expected by any one to arise from a serious and regular attendance upon this ordinance? To suppose therefore, that our Savior should institute this ordinance naturally capable of being useful to all his disciples, and yet should by another appointment exclude from attending upon it those, who are in no respect disqualified for receiving all the same benefits from it, that any others can reasonably or justly look for, would be to suppose, what is absolutely inconsistent with his character, as a wise and prudent, but much more, as an infallible legislator. It is an opinion sometimes advanced, that baptism was intended only for a temporary ordinance. Against which opinion it is very justly pleaded, that as it is capable of answering all the same ends to the succession of christians as to the first believers of the gospel, it would be to represent our Savior as acting an arbitrary and irrational part, to suppose that he should purposely limit and confine its usefulness. But the very same reasoning will hold equally good against our supposing him to have made any rule, by which to limit and restrain the use and benefits of the Lord's Supper. Or if it be inconclusive in the one case, so it must be in the other. In short, if errors about baptism do not, more than

Plea for catholic communion.

Baptism, not a temporary ordinance.

errors

Plea for ca-
tholic com-
munion.

Design of
the Lord's
Supper.

errors about any other particular point of christianity, incapacitate persons for making a wise and regular improvement of the Lord's Supper, how will it be possible to assign any sufficient reason for excluding any one, upon account of these errors, more than on account of any other errors subsisting among christians, from an attendance upon that ordinance? And shall we impute to our blessed Savior an appointment, of which we cannot possibly give any credible or rational account? And then farther, if, as we have been saying, the Lord's Supper be naturally fitted and adapted for answering some very useful and important purposes, with respect to the moral improvement of the mind, the depriving any christians of the use of it, merely on account of some difference of judgment and practice, as to another external rite, is manifestly doing him a prejudice and an injury; and cannot therefore be reconciled to the mild and generous spirit of the gospel. Nor can such an exclusion be with any tolerable propriety or consistency imputed to the merciful redeemer of mankind, as his appointment. It must be in vain to alledge, that the refusing him our communion can be doing him no injury, because there are other churches, which will receive him into theirs. It might as well be said, that to banish him his country for the like difference, would be

no

no injury done to him, because there are other countrys, in which he may be received and entertained. It is plain, that by excluding him from our communion we do all that we can, all that lies within the reach and extent of our power, to deprive him of the use of an ordinance, which he, as well as our selves, is capable of improving to the best and most valuable purposes. And in some instances it may so happen, that, if one society of christians deny a man the liberty of attending upon this ordinance in communion with them, he can seldom or ever have an opportunity of attending upon it at all. Will it be said that, if Christ has expressly appointed such an exclusion, it cannot surely be thought, that any one can be injured by our acting according to his injunctions? I answer, that the very question before us is; whether Christ has ever made such an appointment or not? And if such an appointment manifestly appears to be detrimental and injurious to any of his sincere and worthy disciples, then this is the strongest reason that can possibly be assigned, for believing that he has not. But I go on to observe in the

Plea for catholic communion.

Third place, that, as the general design of the Lord's Supper is to promote purity of heart and life, so its outward form in particular plainly appears to have been especially designed to remind christians of that charity

General.

D

and

Plea for catholic communion.

Particular.

and love, which they owe to one another, notwithstanding any differences of opinion that may subsist among them. The eating of the same bread and drinking of the same wine in a social manner, is as directly expressive of this particular branch of moral obligation, as the washing of the body by baptism is of that universal purity, which the christian religion prescribes. This therefore ought to be considered as the particular end aimed at by the peculiar mode or form of the Lord's Supper, as much as the other is supposed to have been particularly designed by the peculiar mode or form of christian baptism. And in this view it is expressly represented by Saint Paul. "The cup, says he, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ;" that is, is it not our social, friendly celebration of an ordinance intended to be a memorial of his love and compassion in dying upon the cross, in order to promote the happiness and salvation of mankind? And again he says, "we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread," plainly and directly pointing out the Lord's Supper, as an intended symbol of christian unity and love, and as an ordinance purposely adapted to farther and promote it. What now can more directly tend to frustrate and defeat this peculiar design of the ordinance, than the ap-
propria-

appropriating and confining it to persons of this or that particular persuasion concerning another institution of christianity, and the excluding any of our christian brethren from the use and benefit of it, on account only of their entertaining an opinion, with reference to this other institution, different from what we apprehend to be the right and true one? What is the natural tendency of such an exclusion, but to alienate our affections from the rest of the christian world? For let me appeal to every man's own judgment and sense of things, and ask; whether we are not more likely to look upon those, whom we think ourselves not at liberty to receive into this our christian communion, with indifference of mind and coolness of affection, than upon those, whom we consider, as the only persons, with whom we ought to communicate in the celebration of this ordinance? If we say, that we may have a truly catholic and candid spirit, notwithstanding this limitation of our communion; the same exactly may others say, from whose communion we ourselves should be excluded, and as we should think very unjustly. But is it a matter of no consequence, that by such a limitation of our communion we not only act in direct contradiction to this candid and catholic temper and in immediate opposition to its dictates, how careful so ever we may be to cherish it, upon all other occasions, but likewise that we addict ourselves to

Plea for catholic communion.

Plea for catholic communion.

a practice, that has a natural and apparent tendency to weaken the very spirit itself, and principle of christian charity in our hearts? Are not the expediency and usefulness, on the one hand, and the inconveniency and detriment, on the other, of religious observances intirely and absolutely to be determined by the tendency, which they have, to promote the christian spirit or the contrary? And this is exactly what my present argument is founded upon. Far be it for me to say, that these exclusive measures do always in fact damp or impair the generous affections of those, who adhere to them, farther than what is necessarily implied in the very exclusion itself, as a practice manifestly repugnant to those affections? But if this be its direct and immediate tendency, and if we cannot but presume, that it must in many instances have had very unhappy effects of this kind, we must surely consider it as a practice highly inconsistent with the general spirit of the gospel, and with the design of the Lord's Supper in particular. And therefore we cannot suppose our Savior to have appointed any such exclusion, without supposing him at the same time, to act in opposition to the design of his own religion, and to the scope and meaning of his own institution. This, together with the other arguments, that have been already insisted upon, must, I think, appear abundantly

dantly sufficient to shew, that our Savior cannot reasonably be thought, either in the text or in any other part of his instructions given to mankind, to have made the difference of opinion about baptism and that different practice, which is the consequence of it, a ground of separate communion, and that therefore we are under no obligations by virtue of his authority, to do it.

Plea for catholic communion.

Yet give me leave to make a fourth observation, tending to illustrate and confirm the same sentiment ; and that is, that neither our Savior nor his apostles ever made such exclusive terms of communion with respect to other points, which we must needs allow to be of far greater importance than baptism. Thus, for instance, both our Savior and his apostles taught the universal love of God to all mankind ; a sentiment surely of infinitely greater moment, than any notions we can entertain about baptism, be they ever so just and defensible, or any manner of administering it, be it ever so exactly agreeable to the original and primitive standard. But did they ever make the belief of this great and fundamental article a necessary term of communion, or exclude those from the participation of the Lord's Supper, who should deviate from it, or admit principles, that are directly contradictory to it ? Again, were there not even in the apostles days, a very great difference among christians

Example of Christ and his apostles

in other cases ;

Plea for catholic communion.

christians about the rites and ceremonies of the jewish law ; one party supposing them to be intirely abolished, the other, that the obligation to observe them still continued in force, and that they were to make a part of the christian scheme, tho' in fact it was one great design of christianity, for ever to vacate and annul that obligation ? Yet what one intimation is there given of the apostles having appointed a separate communion, or a separate celebration of the Lord's Supper on that account ? Nay, is it not apparent, that even the apostles themselves, who were the first communicants, did at the time of their first celebration of this ordinance, entertain very great errors, with respect to the whole design of christianity itself, looking upon Christ as one appointed to be a temporal prince, and upon his kingdom, as one that was to be founded upon temporal power and civil policy ; which is a notion evidently striking at the very life and being of the christian religion ? And had our Savior thought, that such an error was sufficient to disqualifie them for the communion of the Lord's Supper, could he not have deferred this first celebration of the ordinance, till it had been rectified, that is, till after his resurrection ? And by not doing this, has he not in the clearest manner pointed out to all his disciples and followers, what ought to be their conduct with respect to such different sentiments,

how applicable to different opinions, concerning baptism.

sentiments, as they may happen to entertain about the particular doctrines, or external appointments of the gospel? Has he not thus plainly intimated, that these differences ought not to be the least bar or impediment to our friendly and unlimited communion or participation in all the exercises of religion and ordinances of the gospel? To all that has been said, let me farther add in the

Plea for catholic communion.

Fifth place, that by supposing our Savior, in these words, upon which we are now discoursing, or in any other part of his instructions, to have appointed a separate celebration of the Lord's Supper, merely on account of the different sentiments and practice, that might take place among christians, with relation to baptism, we must necessarily suppose ourselves obliged to exclude from our communion many of those, whom we ourselves believe to be men of serious dispositions, and qualified for the favor of God and for the society and happiness of heaven. And can we upon further reflection believe, that our Savior would not only encourage but expressly injoin our shewing any shyness, any estrangedness of heart towards those, whom God approves, who may in all respects, notwithstanding their different sentiment and practice with relation to baptism be as truly virtuous, and stand as high in the favor of God as those, upon whom we fix no such unfriendly

Exclusion of good christians from our communion unnatural.

Plea for catholic communion.

unfriendly or unbrotherly distinction? Or is it to be supposed, that our blessed Redeemer would exclude from any one privilege here upon earth, those to whom he himself will hereafter say, "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the *heavenly* kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" I know the generous and charitable spirit of many of those, to whom I am now speaking, and whose sentiments upon this head have hitherto been so much different from my own, and that you would have no scruple about admitting serious and well disposed christians into your communion, tho' not agreeing with you in their sentiment and practice, with relation to baptism, were it not for the apprehension you entertain, that our Savior himself has expressly forbid it. But let me entreat you once more to consider; whether he has really forbid it or not. Can you imagine, that he should make an appointment so repugnant to your own good nature? Was he less mild and gracious, less candid and condescending with respect to the mistakes and errors of his sincere disciples, or less pleased with their integrity and virtue than you? Can you believe it of your kind and merciful redeemer, that he would injoin it upon you to exclude any from your communion, whom you yourselves, when in your very best frame and

temper

temper of mind, and when most of all under the influence of the generous and benevolent affections so deeply implanted in human nature, would be inclined to admit?

Plea for catholic communion.

Would not this be throwing a very unworthy imputation upon his character, and such as is utterly inconsistent with the opinion, that you yourselves entertain of it? Believe me, christians, the dictates of a sincere benevolence are the best commentary upon the new testament, and will illustrate its meaning, and point out the beauty and force of particular passages, far beyond what can be effected by criticizing only upon words and phrases, or by the aids of any party-system. One of the principal gratifications of this benevolent and friendly spirit in the heavenly world will be that joy, which will arise from our "sitting down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob", and with all the good and virtuous of every persuasion assembled from every quarter of the world, and the joining with them in the participation of the various blessings and delights of those immortal regions. And why should we now keep ourselves strangers to any joy, that we believe will contribute to the perfection of our bliss hereafter? Why should we deprive ourselves of any foretaste of it, which our present situation will admit of? Or why entertain so

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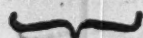
Plea for catholic communion.

hard a thought of our blessed Savior, as to imagine, that by any appointment or injunction of his he should debar us from it? Must not our assemblies be then most pure and perfect, when they are most like to the bright, illustrious assembly above? Or can that be the dishonor of our society, which will be the glory of the heavenly one? When once we are admitted to the peaceful and happy abodes of immortality, what an unwelcome reflection must it be, what grief of heart would it occasion, if grief could be in heaven, to think, that we had excluded from our church below those, whom we shall then see admitted to a full communion in all the privileges and joys of the church above? Are there not many in this assembly, whom, whenever they and you shall have quitted this world, you expect to meet in heaven? Why then will you be afraid or shy of their company now? Do you expect, do you hope, to join with them in the eternal praises and hallelujahs of that blessed world; and will you deliberately exclude them from any acts of devotion here on earth? Let me intreat you to keep these thoughts for one moment in your minds, and then suppose, that you were about to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and that these your friends, whom you believe also to be the friends of God, should

should desire to partake with you in that ordinance. Could you desire their absence? Could you bear to say to them; no; tho' we believe you to be sincerely good and virtuous men, such as Christ our common Lord and master will own and accept of hereafter, yet you are not qualified for our communion, we cannot receive you? What ever errors these your friends may have fallen into concerning baptism, they agree with you in their opinion of the Lord's Supper. They want not to mock you, or to make a jest of your solemnities; or to prostitute them to any servile, mercenary purposes; but to communicate with you in what they, as well as you, believe to be an ordinance of Christ. "Whereto therefore we have already attained, let us walk (together) by the same rule, let us mind the same things." Already you can join with them in offering up prayers and supplications, thanksgivings and praises to your common creator; and why not with them commemorate the goodness and grace of your common redeemer? I would hope, that what has hitherto been said, when duly and impartially attended to, might be sufficient to remove all difficulty or scruple upon this head. But that I may be in nothing wanting towards promoting a practice, which I so firmly believe, should it

Plea for catholic communion.

Plea for catholic communion.



once be introduced amongst you, would be to the lasting honor of your society, and, if naturally and properly improved, contribute not a little to your advancement and progress in all the virtues of the christian life, I purpose in my next discourse to consider such objections, as have been or may be urged against that catholic communion, for which I have now been pleading.

END of the FIRST DISCOURSE.

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JOHN iii. 5.

Except a man be born of water,
and of the spirit, he cannot enter
into the kingdom of God.

AFTER having laid before you, on the last Lord's day, the particular occasion of my discoursing upon these words; which was the frequent use, that has been made of them in vindication of a separate and contracted communion in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, on account of those different sentiments, which subsist among christians, with relation to baptism, I proposed farther and more distinctly to enlarge upon them in the method, which follows. I proposed, in the first place, to shew you, that they have in reality no reference at all either to baptism or to the Lord's Supper, and therefore, that they cannot be supposed to contain any rule or direction about the proper qualifications for being admitted to the latter;

Secondly, that, supposing them to have some such reference in general, they cannot
with

with any propriety be interpreted as a rule by which the right of attending upon the Lord's Supper is confined only to those, who have been baptized in their adult years, nor afford any ground or reason for such a limitation ;

Thirdly, to consider such objections, as have been or may be urged against what I should advance, and then to conclude. The two former of these particulars have been already discussed. And I now proceed to consider,

Objections
answered.

Baptism,
not made a
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the primi-
tive church;

Thirdly, such objections, as have been or may be urged against that catholic communion, for which I have been so lately pleading. It is alleged then in the

First place, that there are no instances in the gospel-history of any person's being admitted to the Lord's Supper, besides those, who had been previously baptized upon profession of their faith in Christ. But is not this an argument, that might be urged with exactly equal force by all those, who believe the doctrines they espouse to be the doctrines of the gospel, and the religious solemnities, to which they adhere, to be the institutions of Christ, for limiting their communion likewise to those, who embrace such doctrines and agree with them in the performance of such religious solemnities ? And would it not
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thus lay a foundation for endless divisions? Objection
answered.

We believe, that adult baptism was the only baptism enjoined by our Savior, and consequently, that it was the only baptism made use of by the primitive christians spoken of in the new testament. In like manner, those, who believe the doctrine of election and reprobation to be a doctrine of the gospel, do, as I suppose, of course believe, that it was the sentiment of all the primitive christians spoken of in the writings of the new testament; and that consequently none are there spoken of as receiving the Lord's Supper, who did not embrace it. Should this now be alleged by any society of professing christians as a reason for refusing to admit any of us to the Lord's table, should we think their conduct sufficiently justified by such a reason? Should we not naturally urge in reply, that, notwithstanding the agreement of the primitive christians in this and other particulars, it might reasonably be supposed, that in process of time, the professors of christianity would, thro' the unavoidable fallibility of the human judgment, fall into different interpretations of scripture; but that it would be in the directest manner contradicting the moderate, mild and friendly spirit of the gospel to imagine, that it had obliged them, on this account, to do their utmost

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Objections
answered.

towards depriving one another of the use of an institution designed for the benefit of christians in general? I know not, that there are any churches which make the belief of this doctrine a necessary term of communion. I have only introduced the supposition for the sake of illustrating the argument we are upon; and to shew, that, if there were any such society, the objection mentioned would be altogether as conclusive against the enlargement of their communion, as it can be against the enlargement of yours. It is alleged indeed in the

Not a mere
rite or ceremony;

Second place, that, tho' the difference of judgment, as to speculative points, subsisting among christians, can be no just bar to their friendly and catholic communion, yet one external rite may justly be made a necessary qualification for being admitted to the performance of another, and that therefore baptism may justly be made a necessary qualification for participating in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. To this I answer, that the argument is intirely founded upon a false notion both of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of which are to be considered as mere rites and ceremonies; but both of them as means wisely calculated and prudently adapted for the bettering and the improvement of our tempers. Now to refuse any person the use and benefit of one means of

of religion for no other reason, but because he has not enjoyed the benefit of another, must surely appear, upon a little consideration, to be a conduct highly inconsistent and self-repugnant. Besides, I would ask, whether, tho' we believe those good and serious christians, whom we exclude from our communion, to be mistaken in their judgment and practice with relation to the ordinance of baptism, we do not nevertheless think it their duty to attend upon the Lord's Supper? Do we imagine, that all those numerous assemblies of professing christians, who differ from us upon the subject of baptism, had better, whilst they thus continue to differ, refrain from attending upon that ordinance? We do not, I think, advance any thing of this sort, but suppose, that it is their duty to partake of the Lord's Supper, notwithstanding this their apprehended error. But, if it be their duty to attend upon that ordinance, can it be our duty to discourage that attendance, and to do what we can, as indeed we do, by excluding them from our communion, to hinder them from performing this their duty? Farther too; if it be their duty, notwithstanding their mistaken sentiment and erroneous practice with relation to baptism, to attend upon the Lord's Supper, we must suppose them to be properly qualified for that attendance; for it can never be their du-

Objections
answered.

ty, to attend upon it, tho' unqualified. Surely then, if they are properly qualified for communicating in any other christian society, they must be altogether as well qualified for communicating in ours. So that it must be utterly in vain to allege, in defence of limiting our communion, on account of the differences subsisting among christians, with reference to baptism, that we suppose the persons, whom we by this means exclude, may lawfully and justly communicate with other christian societies, because from this very supposition, it does directly and immediately follow, that they may as justly and as lawfully be admitted into the communion of our own. Near akin to this last mentioned objection, is another topic of argument, which we sometimes find to be insisted upon; and that is, in the

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Third place, that baptism is a matter of practice, and that therefore the differences with relation to it ought not to be put upon the same footing with differences in point of speculation. But let it be considered, that it is as truly a matter of speculation, as it is a matter of practice. And the different practice about it must depend intirely upon a different interpretation given to particular passages of scripture, or the different judgment formed concerning the sense and meaning of them. And if considered as a mere error of
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judgment any difference with relation to the mode or subject of baptism would not be a sufficient reason for excluding others from our communion, would it not be very unjust and cruel to exclude them for this additional reason only, that they act according to their judgment? But then, on the other hand, as the different practice about baptism terminates in a difference of judgment, as its source and origin, so those differences, which are in this argument, and by way of distinction called points of speculation, must be considered as consequentially influencing the practice. For have not the different sentiments, which we form concerning the particular doctrines of christianity an immediate, direct and apparent influence upon our religious solemnities, upon our stated exercises and acts of devotion, and upon the tenor and strain of all those public discourses with which they are attended? So that there seems in reality to be no foundation for thus distinguishing baptism from the other differences subsisting among christians, by calling it a matter of practice. But granting, that it might with some peculiar propriety be considered in that light, it is plain, that men may differ about it with as much innocence and integrity, as about those points, that are said to be more peculiarly speculative. Let us suppose it to be in some

Objections
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Objections
answered.

peculiar sense a matter of practice ; still may not its importance be inquired into and considered ? And will any one take upon him to affirm, that it is in itself a matter of greater importance than many of those different speculations subsisting among christians ; such, for instance, as relate to the character and perfections of the supreme Deity, which we yet allow, ought not to occasion any breach of communion ? I would only farther add, under this particular, that, if baptism can, in any peculiar sense be called a matter of practice, certainly the differences, that subsisted among the christians of the apostles days about the jewish ceremonies, meats offered to idols and the like, must with equal propriety and peculiarity come under the same denomination. And yet is there, in the new testament, the least intimation given us of any separate communions, that were set up, on account of these differences, by the authority, or under the sanction of the apostles ? Nay, does not St. Paul, when treating of these very differences, exhort to such love and unity, such harmony and concord notwithstanding, as plainly implies, that he never once entertained the least thought of encouraging any separation on account of them ? But it is objected farther in the

Fourth place, that the admitting those to our communion, who have not been baptized in their adult years, would be the means of encouraging them to treat, with indifference and contempt, what we believe to be the only christian baptism. To this I would answer, that we cannot expect any to comply with what we believe to be the only christian baptism, till they are convinced by the arguments which we make use of to prove it so. Of the strength and clearness of these arguments, in themselves, we are well and thoroughly satisfied. And can we imagine, shall we so far dishonor and reproach ourselves, as to imagine, that the admitting those, who are not as yet convinced by them, into our society and christian friendship, would darken their understandings, or any way incapacitate them for perceiving the force of such arguments, or be the means of making any others not belonging to our society less willing to attend to, or to examine them? And, when once men are convinced, that adult baptism, and that only is the baptism instituted by Christ, is there not exactly the same security for their regarding that ordinance in their practice, as there is for their regarding in like manner the institution of the Lord's Supper? Was it ever alleged as a reason against attending upon the Lord's Supper,

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Objections
answered.

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Objections
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or do we believe that it ever was a reason with any one for neglecting that ordinance, that it is not made a necessary term of being admitted to the use of some other ordinance? Why then must any be said to encourage in others an indifference with relation to the primitive institution and practice of baptism, or, as it is sometimes expressed, to give it up, merely because they do not make a compliance with it, in a manner agreeable to what they themselves believe to have been the original meaning and design of it, a necessary term of communion? Can they be said to give up an ordinance, who assert, and contend for its divine institution? Or might it not with equal propriety be said of every other article not made a term of communion, that it is therefore given up? And undoubtedly, if for the sake of preventing mens indifference to what we look upon as being the only christian or scripture-baptism, and in order to keep up in their minds a just sense of its importance, we are at liberty to exclude from our communion all those, who have not complied with it, according to what we ourselves suppose to have been the purport and design of its original institution, others may urge the same reason, and with exactly the same propriety and force of argument, for confining their communion likewise to

to any particular sentiments or forms of religion, a sense of the importance of which they also are desirous of supporting and preserving among christians. And thus would a foundation be laid, for an intire abolition of the truly christian communion, and for considering the Lord's Supper, not as an emblem of our relation to Christ, but only of our affection to this or that particular party. And this leads me to consider,

Objections
answered.

Fifthly, another argument, that has sometimes been made use of, in order to justify the confining of our communion to those, who have been baptized in their adult years, and that is, that it is a prudential method of keeping up the interest of our own denomination. This is an argument insisted upon, as a sufficient reason for limiting our communion to those of our own persuasion in the article of baptism, even by those, who acknowledge, that there is no rule or precept injoining such a limitation in the new-testament. Let me seriously and in the name of God expostulate with such. And let me ask them, whether, if there be indeed no law or commandment of Christ limiting the use and benefit of the Lord's Supper to those, who adhere to what we believe to be the original institution of baptism, by what law or what authority can we assume the right of prescribing such a limitation?

Making
new terms
of communion ;

Presumption

Objections
answered.

And

Arrogance
of that
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Prudential
maxims no
justification
of it.

mitation? Has Christ submitted his own ordinances and institutions to our alteration and amendment? May we manage, suspend and controul them at pleasure? If we may, undoubtedly others will be equally justified in doing the like. If the Lord's Supper, according to its original institution, was designed for the common benefit of all serious and well-disposed christians, and the right of admission to it not confined to those, who should adhere to the scriptural appointment of baptism, it plainly follows, that if we confine it to those alone, and do what lies in our power to exclude others from a participation of it, we act in direct and express contrariety to this its original institution. And, if what we apprehend to be a maxim of prudence, will justify us in introducing such an alteration as this, with reference to the persons proper to be admitted to the Lord's supper, may not any others make what alterations they think fit, as to the mode or subjects of baptism, and be equally justified by alledging only in their defence, that they acted upon what they supposed to be a maxim of prudence and convenience? Or what could we possibly urge against their introducing any such alterations in the article of baptism, which would not equally condemn our own alterations with reference to the Lord's Supper?

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If, according to the original institution of the Lord's Supper, every serious and well-disposed christian has a right to communion in that ordinance, notwithstanding his sentiment and practice differing from our own, as to the point of baptism ; and yet we exclude persons of that character from our communion, solely on account of that difference ; is not this deliberately and avowedly setting up a communion different from that of Christ, and this not only another and a different communion, but a directly contrary one ? The interest of christianity must undoubtedly require, that all its ordinances should be administered according to their original institution. If therefore the interest of our society requires that this original institution should be departed from, what does this imply, but that we have set up an interest in opposition to that of the gospel ? And if we have a right thus prudentially to make our own particular practices and sentiments in religion a term of communion, others must surely have an equal right to make whatever particular sentiments and practices in religion they shall think proper, to be terms of communion likewise. Nay, every particular person will have a right to insist upon it, that no one is properly qualified to partake in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, who does not embrace all his particular

Objections
answered.

Objections
answered.

cular and favourite opinions and fall in with such practices, as he thinks to be alone agreeable to the christian doctrine. And thus would the very idea of a christian communion be intirely and absolutely lost. Thus would christianity instead of being a foundation for peace and harmony, encourage its professors to be perpetually excommunicating, reproaching and calumniating one another. I say excommunicating; because the debarring any from our communion, merely on account of differing opinions concerning any of the particular doctrines or institutions of the gospel, is as truly an excommunication of them, as if we had expelled them from our communion, on the same account, after they had for some time belonged to it. I say calumniating and reproaching; for certainly, how innocent soever may be our intentions, it is in reality fixing no small reproach upon our fellow-christians to represent them, by such an exclusion, as unworthy of christian communion, and unqualified for it. And it must be utterly in vain to allege in answer, that, tho' we do not admit them to our communion, we yet consider and look upon them, as our christian brethren. For this, instead of apologizing for, or vindicating such an exclusion, does only the more strongly evince its impropriety; and does indeed

deed carry in it such an argument against it, as must be absolutely and for ever unanswerable. For if they are really brethren, why are they not treated as such? Why do we refuse them the use of an ordinance intended for the common benefit of every christian brother? Why do we call them brethren, and yet persist in treating them like strangers? Do we not by refusing to admit them into the communion of brethren, more expressly deny them to be such, than we can by words only make it appear either to themselves or others, that we look upon them to be so? Or what account is to be made of such verbal compliments, when they are so directly contradicted by the uniform tenor of our actions? These then are the natural, the genuine, the unavoidable consequences of assuming to ourselves the power of making terms of communion without the authority of Christ, and for the sake merely of promoting the interest of a party. Nay, if such prudential maxims, as we are now speaking of, will justify our departing in one single instance from the original laws and commandments of Christ, they will justify us or any others, as christians, in every other deviation from them. Thus, for instance, the church of Rome thought it a very prudent method for advancing her interest, and so undoubtedly it was,

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Objections
answered.

Objections
answered.

not only to make new terms of communion, but to debar men from the right of private judgment, to lock up the scriptures from the inspection and use of private persons, and to persecute those, who did not receive for true, such opinions, as she thought proper to declare sound and orthodox. But are the roman catholics therefore justified in so doing? It is very observable, that even they themselves do not look upon these prudential maxims alone, as being a sufficient vindication of their conduct; but think it necessary to produce, what they call, a scripture-warrant for their proceedings, and to defend themselves by such passages of the new testament, as they would have to pass for the authority of Christ. These do, in our judgment, by no means amount to a proof of the principles, which they are intended to establish: and therefore we reject the conduct of the church of Rome in this respect, as arbitrary, tyrannical and antichristian. And must not our own conduct likewise in making adult baptism a necessary term of communion be liable to the very same objection, unless we can produce some law or commandment of Christ, that has appointed it to be so? If such a law or precept is any where to be found, let it be produced. If not, with what consistency can we pretend to be the advocates

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for christian liberty, and to declare against the imposing of new terms of communion, in the christian church, when we are ourselves deliberately violating that liberty, and are, in the constitution of our own churches, directly guilty of that very imposition itself? You will observe, no doubt, that in considering this last objection, I have all along taken it for granted, that the confining our communion to those who have been baptized in their adult years, is really the most prudent method of promoting the cause or interest, which is denominated from that practice. I am very far from thinking that it is so, if by this be meant promoting the use and observance of adult baptism as an institution of Christ, and not merely the keeping up a party-name. But I have purposely avoided every consideration of that kind, from a persuasion, that in administering the ordinances of Christ, we are to govern ourselves according to the laws of Christ, and not according to the prudential maxims of any particular interest whatsoever. This is what we should insist upon, and eagerly contend for, with respect to baptism; and the plea must, without all dispute, be equally solid, with reference to the Lord's Supper.

Objections
answered.

And indeed the keeping up of party-names, and of separate, divided interests in the christian church

Party-
names, and
party-inter-
ests;

Objections
answered.

how cen-
sured by
St. Paul.

church is so far from being necessary, that the practice was early condemned, and that in the strongest manner, by St. Paul, as a very dangerous innovation. "Every one of you, (as he pathetically describes the case in writing to the Corinthians) says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" He did not want to lessen their esteem either of himself, or of Peter, or of Apollos, whom he looked upon to be, as well as himself, the true apostles of Christ. But he did not think it a proper method of expressing that esteem, to divide themselves into parties, that should derive their names, some from one of these apostles, and some from another of them. Nay he does not, we see, make any exception in favor even of those, who, in the spirit of faction, called themselves Christians. This was St. Paul's opinion concerning party-names and party interests. A fondness for which is yet by many professing christians so warmly cherished, as if the whole of religion and of christianity consisted only in a zealous and violent attachment to them.

Re-capitulation.

Thus then have I endeavoured to shew you by a variety of arguments drawn from the

the style and phraseology of scripture, from the original connection of the text, from our Savior's own interpretation of it, from the character of the person to whom these words were addressed, from the genius and spirit of the gospel, from the nature and design of the Lord's Supper in particular, and from the many unhappy consequences which would necessarily ensue upon supposing the contrary, the truth of that proposition, which it was the main business and design of this and our preceding discourse to illustrate and confirm. And I would hope, that enough has been said to prove, that neither by this declaration of our Savior's, nor by any other principle or maxim contained in the new testament, are we authorized, or in the least degree encouraged to make adult baptism a necessary term of communion, even tho' it be indeed, as we apprehend, the only baptism instituted by Christ.

Recapitulation.

To me it appears, that a friendly and generous, a candid and catholic communion between all serious and sincere christians is not only most honorable to our holy religion, but that it would likewise be most conducive towards promoting both the knowledge of its principles and its great, ultimate end, the purification of our souls, and the establishment

Conclusion.

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Conclusion.

ment of all good and virtuous affections in the hearts of men. I should not therefore have acted the part of a real friend to our common cause and interest, as christians, had I neglected to lay before you clearly and fully such considerations upon this head, as are to my own mind abundantly satisfactory and thoroughly convincing. But so far am I from being unwilling to hearken to any thing, that may be objected against the sentiments I have been defending, that on the contrary, I most earnestly intreat you to consider, what objections can be made; and that, to this end, you would deliberately examine the weight and force of the arguments that have been produced. But you will, I hope, at the same time consider, that the truth must lie on one side, or on the other, and that, if you cannot make any exceptions that shall be sufficient to invalidate what has been offered, you will then be bound by all the sacred ties of conscience and religion, and by your professed regard for the pure and uncorrupted gospel of Christ no longer to adhere to a practice, which you cannot upon consistent and rational principles defend. And surely much need not be said to induce you to inquire very seriously and chearfully, whether, notwithstanding your former practice, and clear persuasion of the propriety of it, you may

may not after all be at full liberty to embrace and to receive into your communion every sincere and pious christian, however differing from yourselves in his judgment concerning the particular doctrines or institutions of religion, as a brother in the Lord. Should any convictions of this sort be the effect of what has been delivered upon this subject, you will, I doubt not, find your hearts enlarged, and your kind and generous affections dilated after a different manner from what you could before have experienced, whilst you thought yourselves bound, by the authority of Christ himself, to look with some degrees of jealousy and estrangement even upon those, of whom nevertheless you have firmly believed, that they might be altogether as good and worthy christians as any of your own communion. You will then be pleased to find, that your church here on earth will admit of a nearer resemblance to the church above, than you were before aware of. You will feel a growing pleasure and satisfaction in denominating yourselves, rather from that relation, which you bear to the great author and finisher of our faith, the common friend and benefactor of christians, than from your peculiar attachment to any particular ordinance of the gospel. For which however you may still

Conclusion.

retain every degree of affection, which the gospel itself does either justify, or require. Like children of the same family, who by some unhappy event have been long separated from each other, and are at length introduced into a mutual acquaintance and established in a lasting friendship, will you and they, whom you shall declare yourselves willing to receive into your communion, congratulate each other, on account of your relation to the same Lord and master thus completely owned, thus publicly and reciprocally acknowledged. And for all these reasons, instead of reflecting with any disgust or resentment upon my present attempt, you will rather be apt to blame my negligence in not having made it sooner. But why should I suggest, that I have been all this while advancing only a singular and private opinion? I know there are among you those, who concur with me in the principles I have been contending for. And, I hope, I shall have your concurrence also, in endeavouring to promote a practice agreeable to these principles. If we believe a catholic and friendly communion to be the communion appointed by Christ, we cannot surely look upon it, as a matter of indifference, whether it prevails in our society or not. For us therefore to be indifferent about it is to indulge a temper directly

directly contrary to our own sense and judgment of things ; and which, whenever we coolly reflect, we ourselves must necessarily condemn. But of you, my brethren, I will hope better things ; and that you will not be less solicitous in " holding fast " and promoting to the utmost of your power that, which is good, than you have been in " proving all things," in order to discover it. Conclusion.

And :

" O THOU supreme, eternal SPIRIT,
 " creator of all minds and fountain of all good,
 " God of love and peace, whose gracious
 " influences are not less necessary to the esta-
 " blishment, progress and perfection of the
 " divine life in our souls, than the all-sustain-
 " ing energy of thy universal providence to
 " the preservation and continuance of our
 " being ; illuminate our minds, we most
 " humbly entreat thee, with the knowledge
 " of thine heavenly truth. Scatter those
 " mists of superstition, folly and prejudice,
 " which may hitherto have prevented our
 " clear and lively conviction of it. Suffer
 " us not *by any means* to be led aside *from*
 " *the simplicity* of the gospel. May our faith
 " in its pure and uncorrupted doctrines
 " cleanse and purify our hearts. Enable us
 more

Conclusion. “ more effectually to follow after the things
 “ which make for peace, and things wherewith
 “ one may edify another. And grant, that
 “ by cherishing the habit of sincere and fer-
 “ vent benevolence, we may be daily grow-
 “ ing more exemplary in life and conver-
 “ sation, and be incessantly advancing in
 “ our meetness for the blessed and immortal
 “ abodes of perfect harmony and love.”

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